

does not recall consulting anyone about whether Eckstein's allegations were true, but assumed they were not. Having been closely involved with the Hudson decision, she said she knew there had been no White House influence. Sibbison assumed a blanket denial of mention of Ickes was correct and wrote it that way. She reasoned at the time that, if there were some truth to the allegations, and some finesse was needed in answering McCain's charges, the drafting of the letter would not have been delegated to her level. Leshy then edited Sibbison's draft.<sup>615</sup>

Babbitt signed the letter. Babbitt and Leshy stated they discussed the letter before it went out, but not in detail. Leshy was the only witness who said he discussed with Babbitt the Secretary's meeting with Eckstein in preparing this response. Leshy said he did not on any occasion ask the Secretary for a detailed description of the meeting and the entire conversation. He said he knows he asked Babbitt if he talked to Ickes about Hudson and Babbitt replied no, without amplification. Leshy said he did not think it was important to know any more and did not expect further detail. Leshy and Shields both state they have no recollection of any discussion with Babbitt prior to his signing the letter about the significance of the words "told" or "instructed" used to describe the alleged communication by Ickes to Babbitt.<sup>616</sup>

McCain's letter stated that Eckstein claims Babbitt said he was "told" by Ickes to make the decision that day, quoting the Eckstein affidavits as the Wall Street Journal had. Babbitt's letter reads, "I must regretfully dispute Mr. Eckstein's assertion that I told him that Mr. Ickes

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<sup>615</sup>Leshy incorporated a denial that Babbitt had been contacted by high level White House officials on other Indian gaming matters. Babbitt's Grand Jury testimony and other evidence recounted above in Sections II.G.8.a. and II.K.1.c. establishes that this is not correct.

<sup>616</sup>OIC Interview of John Leshy, July 29, 1999, at 3. OIC Interview of Anne Shields, July 29, 1999, at 2-3.